

Rowe v. Ray

Civil Action No. 3:19cv418

EXHIBIT I

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Sussex 2 State Prison is a Potemkin Prison

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June 7, 2018

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How many of you have ever heard of a Potemkin Village? According to Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary (11th Edition), a Potemkin Village is "an impressive facade or show designed to hide an undesirable fact or condition." It is named after Grigori Aleksandrovich Potemkin (1739-1791), a Russian field marshal and statesman, who supposedly built impressive fake villages along the route that Catherine II (i.e. Catherine the Great) would often travel. The fake villages served to conceal all of the cruelties and injustices that existed during her reign as Empress of Russia from 1762-1796. I maintain that this same "impressive facade" exist to conceal the cruelties and injustices taking place behind the walls of Sussex 2 State Prison (S2SP)

The Virginia Department of Corrections (VADOC) endeavors to have all of its prisons accredited by the American Correctional Association (ACA)-the nations largest nonprofit corrections and accreditation agency. According to the ACA, its mission (ugh!) is to provide a "professional organization for all individuals and groups, both public and private, that share a common goal of improving the justice system." (ugh!)

In order to become fully accredited by the ACA, a prison must comply with a multitude of ACA standards set forth in its Standards for Adult Correctional Institutions Manual (www.aca.org). These standards cover everything from the management and designs of prisons, the training and development of prison employees, and the treatment and

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management of prisoners.

These standards dictate, for instance, that "segregation housing units provide living conditions that approximate those of general inmate population" (ACA Standard 4-4139); that prisoners be provided "three nutritionally adequate, palatable, and attractive meals a day" (ACA Standard 4-4313); that "dietary allowances, as adjusted for age, sex, and activity, should meet or exceed the recommended dietary allowances published by the National Academy of Science" (ACA Standard 4-4316); that prisoners "who need health care beyond the resources available in the facility, as determined by the responsible physician, are transferred under appropriate security provisions to a facility where such care is on call or available 24 hours a day" (ACA Standard 4-4348); that "routine and emergency dental care is provided to each offender under the direction and supervision of a licensed dentist" (ACA Standard 4-4360); that the vacancy rate among the prison staff "does not exceed 10 percent for any 18-month period" so that inmates can have access to all staff, programs, and services (ACA Standards 4-4050, 4-4051, and 4-4052),

Attempting to comply with the ACA standards above and the hundred others contained within its Standards for Adult Correctional Institutions Manual conflicts with SASP's notorious punishment model and its never-ending quest to save and make money. So it has found a way to gain and maintain its accreditation from the ACA by utilizing the same impressive facade Grigori Pontemkin used to deceive Catherine the Great. Here's how it is done:

Prison authorities at SASP, as in all other prisons, are given

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advanced notice that ACA auditors and monitors (Inspectors) will be arriving at a specific time to check for compliance with its standards. To ensure it passes inspection, prison authorities utilizes a sophisticated form of manipulation to convince prisoners that it's actually in their best interest to aid and assist prison authorities in covering up and concealing their own abuse, mistreatment, and neglect. Thus, in the weeks leading up to the inspection, it is quite common to see incarcerated workers enthusiastically GI-ing the prison. Vents are dusted. Floors are scrubbed and waxed. Walls are painted. Flowers are planted. Grass is cut. The food is cooked and prepared with extra care to make it look "attractive". Prison employees become nice and respectful towards prisoners in the days leading up to the inspection. This is done to soften the prisoners up so they'll be less inclined to give ACA Inspectors a bad report. Placing the entire prison on lockdown, so contact between ACA Inspectors and prisoners is minimized, also serves the same function.

The prison Warden and other top brass then put on an impressive show by parading the ACA Inspectors around the prison on a pre-determined route so they can see the newly painted walls, the neatly trimmed grass, the waxed floors, the colorful flowers, the appealing food, the "professional" and "respectable" employees, and the well-mannered and well-behaved prisoners trapped behind the doors. Impressed by this facade/show, accreditation is ensured.

When the ACA Inspectors leave, however, the show ends, the facade is removed, and it's back to business as usual; back to treating us in a degrading and dehumanizing manner and subjecting us to

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conditions that are harsh and cruel and overly oppressive. When it's time for the next inspection, the facade is erected once again.

What are we to do when trapped behind an impressive facade; a facade which hides the abuse, the suffering, the darkness, the despair, the tears, the deaths, the bloodshed? Who can hear us screaming and pleading for help from behind these thick slabs of concrete and steel? Amidst the groans, the sighs, and the teary eyes, I bow my head, pick up my pen, and write, hoping that you, the People, will see and hear the truth.